CLAIMS

We claim:

1   1.   An e-mail communication method comprising the steps of:

2   inserting in an e-mail message a voice communications identifier;

3   transmitting said e-mail message to a recipient; and,

4   responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications identifier,

5   establishing a voice communications link with said recipient.

1   2.   The e-mail communication method of claim 1, wherein said inserting step further

2   comprises the step of inserting in said e-mail message a selectable symbol denoting

3   voice communications availability.

1   3.   The e-mail communication method of claim 1, wherein said inserting step further

2   comprises the step of:

3   inserting in said e-mail message a reference to a sender of said e-mail message;

4   and,

5   embedding computer program code in said e-mail message, wherein said

6   computer program code is configured to establish a voice communications link with said

7   sender.

1   4.   The e-mail communication method of claim 3, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a

4   voice communications link with said sender.

1   5.   The e-mail communication method of claim 3, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the steps of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, determining a link address for said sender based on said reference, and

4   executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice

5   communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1   6.   The e-mail communication method of claim 5, wherein said link address is a

2   telephone number.

1   7.   The e-mail communication method of claim 5, wherein said link address is an IP

2   address.

1   8.   The e-mail communication method of claim 1, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said

4   recipient.

1   9.   The e-mail communication method of claim 1, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient

4   over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1   10.   An e-mail communication method comprising the steps of:

2   detecting a voice communications identifier in an e-mail message transmitted by

3   a sender;

4   responsive to detecting said voice communications identifier, displaying a

5   selectable icon; and,

6   responsive to a selection of said icon, establishing a voice communications link

7   with said sender.

1   11.   The e-mail communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the steps of:

3   extracting from said e-mail message embedded computer program code

4   configured to establish a voice communications link with said sender; and,

5   responsive to said selection of said icon, executing said embedded computer

6   program code in order to establish a voice communications link with said sender.

1   12.   The e-mail communication method of claim 11, further comprising the step of

2   extracting an embedded reference to said sender from said e-mail message.

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1   13.   The e-mail communication method of claim 12, wherein said executing step

2   further comprises the steps of:

3   determining a link address for said sender based on said extracted reference;

4   and,

5   executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice

6   communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1   14.   The e-mail communication method of claim 13, wherein said link address is a

2   telephone number.

1   15.   The e-mail communication method of claim 13, wherein said link address is an

2   IP address.

1   16.   The e-mail communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said

4   recipient.

1   17.   The e-mail communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient

4   over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1   18.   The e-mail communications method of claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

2   extracting from said e-mail message embedded references to said sender and at

3   least one other recipient of said e-mail message; and,

4   displaying a corresponding selectable icon for each of said at least one other

5   recipients.

1   19.   The e-mail communication method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:

2   responsive to a selection of one of said selectable icons, identifying a

3   corresponding recipient and determining a link address for said corresponding recipient

4   based on said extracted reference; and,

5   executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice

6   communications link with said corresponding recipient according to said determined link

7   address.

1   20.   The e-mail communication method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:

2   responsive to a selection of two or more of said selectable icons, identifying a

3   corresponding recipient for each selected icon and determining a link address for said

4   corresponding recipients based on said extracted references; and,

5   executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a

6   conference call with said corresponding recipients according to said determined link

7   addresses.

1   21.   A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having a

2   plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform

3   the steps of:

4   inserting in an e-mail message a voice communications identifier;

5   transmitting said e-mail message to a recipient; and,

6   responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications identifier,

7   establishing a voice communications link with said recipient.

1   22.   The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said inserting step further

2   comprises the step of inserting in said e-mail message a selectable symbol denoting

3   voice communications availability.

1   23.   The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said inserting step further

2   comprises the step of:

3   inserting in said e-mail message a reference to a sender of said e-mail message;

4   and,

5   embedding computer program code in said e-mail message, wherein said

6   computer program code is configured to establish a voice communications link with said

7   sender.

1   24.   The machine readable storage of claim 23, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a

4   voice communications link with said sender.

1   25.   The machine readable storage of claim 23, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the steps of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, determining a link address for said sender based on said reference, and

4   executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice

5   communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1   26.   The machine readable storage of claim 25, wherein said link address is a

2   telephone number.

1   27.   The machine readable storage of claim 25, wherein said link address is an IP

2   address.

1   28.   The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said

4   recipient.

1   29.   The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient

4   over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1   30.   An machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having

2   a plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to

3   perform the steps of:

4   detecting a voice communications identifier in an e-mail message transmitted by

5   a sender;

6   responsive to detecting said voice communications identifier, displaying a

7   selectable icon; and,

8   responsive to a selection of said icon, establishing a voice communications link

9   with said sender.

1   31.   The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the steps of:

3   extracting from said e-mail message embedded computer program code

4   configured to establish a voice communications link with said sender; and,

5   responsive to said selection of said icon, executing said embedded computer

6   program code in order to establish a voice communications link with said sender.

1   32.   The machine readable storage of claim 31, further comprising the step of

2   extracting an embedded reference to said sender from said e-mail message.

1   33.   The machine readable storage of claim 32, wherein said executing step further

2   comprises the steps of:

3   determining a link address for said sender based on said extracted reference;

4   and,

5   executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice

6   communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1   34.   The machine readable storage of claim 33, wherein said link address is a

2   telephone number.

1   35.   The machine readable storage of claim 33, wherein said link address is an IP

2   address.

1   36.   The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step

2   comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3   identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said

4   recipient.

1 37.   The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step

2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications

3 identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient

4 over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 38.   The e-mail communications method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of:

2   extracting from said e-mail message embedded references to said sender and at

3 least one other recipient of said e-mail message; and,

4   displaying a corresponding selectable icon for each of said at least one other

5 recipients.

1 39.   The machine readable storage of claim 38, further comprising the steps of:

2   responsive to a selection of one of said selectable icons, identifying a

3 corresponding recipient and determining a link address for said corresponding recipient

4 based on said extracted reference; and,

5   executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice

6 communications link with said corresponding recipient according to said determined link

7 address.

1   40.   The machine readable storage of claim 38, further comprising the steps of:

2   responsive to a selection of two or more of said selectable icons, identifying a

3   corresponding recipient for each selected icon and determining a link address for said

4   corresponding recipients based on said extracted references; and,

5   executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a

6   conference call with said corresponding recipients according to said determined link

7   addresses.

1   41.   An electronic message article of manufacture for use in a computer

2   communications network comprising:

3   a message header component encapsulating a reference to at least one of a

4   sending node in the network and a recipient node in the network;

5   a text message component encapsulating message text which can be extracted

6   from the electronic message and displayed in a message client; and,

7   an executable voice communications link program component configured to

8   establish a voice communications link between said sending and recipient nodes.

1   42.   The electronic message article of manufacture of claim 41, wherein said voice

2   communications link is a Voice over IP (VoIP) based communications link.

1   43.   The electronic message article of manufacture of claim 42, wherein said voice

2   communications link is a telephony-based link

1   44.   An e-mail client comprising:

2   a conventional e-mail processor, said conventional e-mail processor extracting

3   and displaying message text encapsulated in a received e-mail; and,

4   a voice conversation processor, said voice conversation processor identifying a

5   voice communications link identifier encapsulated in said received e-mail, displaying a

6   selectable icon in response to detecting said voice communications link identifier and,

7   responsive to a selection of said selectable icon, establishing a voice communications

8   link with a sender of said received e-mail.